



The American Pain Foundation

Dedicated to eliminating the undertreatment of pain in America

Pain Facts

An Overview of American Pain Surveys

Below are the top-line findings, arranged by date, from major national pain surveys conducted between 1996 and 2004. In addition, we have included *Pain in Maryland*—a recent survey conducted by the American Pain Foundation and the Maryland Pain Initiative, which is the first and only statewide survey of pain.

1996

Pain and Absenteeism in the Workplace

The purpose of this 1996 study, conducted by Louis Harris and Associates for Ortho McNeil, was to gain a better understanding of the relationship between pain-related conditions and employee absenteeism in the United States.

Key Findings:

- More than 2/3 of all full-time employees (68%) , the equivalent of more than eighty million full-time employees, suffer from pain-related conditions.
- Fourteen percent of all full-time employees—more than 17 million—took sick days in 1995 due to pain conditions, resulting in more than 50 million work days. Sixty-nine percent said they were compensated 100% of their salaries for sick days which translates to a cost of more than \$3 billion in wages for lost sick days.
- Eighty percent of all pain sufferers have gone on short-term disability because of pain.
- More than half of full-time employees said they suffer from pain that is not due to work-related injuries. Only 18% said pain was due to work-related injuries.
- More than 2/3 of employee benefit managers believed that pain conditions had a detrimental effect on companies' profitability and productivity.
- After colds and other family members' illnesses, 38% of employee benefit managers name pain conditions as the leading medical conditions causing employees to call in sick. Employers also believe that the average number of absences is higher than the three days reported by employees. Employee benefits managers name work-related pain conditions as the leading cause of absence.

1997

Pain in America: A Survey of American Attitudes Toward Pain

This 1998 survey was conducted in 1997 by TBC Research for the Mayday Fund, a foundation established for the purpose of reducing the physical and psychological toll of pain and its consequences.

Key Findings:

- People avoid taking medication because they fear addiction, and they would rather try alternative techniques first.
- Pain is a part of everyday life that everyone experiences at some point, and many experience it frequently.
- People would rather bear pain than take action to relieve it. They avoid contacting a doctor for their own pain but would act readily for a family member in pain.
- In severe cases, upwards of two-thirds Americans supported using high doses of pain medications like morphine, even though they were given the strongest argument against it—the risk of addiction.
- Fundamentally, the public believed not all pain can be addressed, and that medical science did not have all the answers.

1997

Pain and the Older Americans Survey

Louis Harris and Associates conducted this 1997 survey on behalf of The National Council on Aging with underwriting by Ortho McNeil.

- One in five Americans over 60 takes medication to control pain that lasts for six months or more. This represents 18% of Americans in this age group.
- The majority of seniors who take pain medication believe it is effective in controlling pain. Nine in ten said these prescription medications were effective. Eighty-nine percent of those who took OTCs said they were effective.
- NSAIDs were the most commonly used prescription medication.
- Two out of three older Americans who take pain medications said pain still prevents them from performing routine tasks, engaging in hobbies, or doing things they enjoy. Of these 44% said they had difficulty walking, and 17% said pain prevents them from accomplishing daily activities such as housework and cooking.
- Older Americans who take pain medication are more likely to suffer from arthritis (44%), bone and joint pain (31%), and low back pain than any other condition.
- NSAIDs were the most commonly used prescription medication.
- Seven in 10 take OTC pain relievers, and 1 in 4 of these experience side effects from these medications. Half said the side effects were severe. One in ten said they were hospitalized because of this.
- The most common side effects experienced by older people who take pain drugs were drowsiness (20%), dizziness (18%), and indigestion or gastrointestinal disorders (17%). Other common side effects of pain medication were nausea/vomiting/diarrhea (13%), and constipation (12%).
- More than one in ten seniors who take NSAIDs have ulcers (13%), and 4% were hospitalized because of side effects caused by their pain drug. Among those who have side effects stemming from non-prescription NSAIDs, 7% are hospitalized.
- Seniors who took prescription pain drugs were likely to do so for a long period of time. Six in ten who used non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) took them for six months or more despite warnings against long-term use.
- Seniors were likely to take non-prescription pain medication far longer. On average, seniors who took acetaminophen, over-the-counter NSAIDs, and aspirin took them for five years. Fifteen percent took them for more than 20 years. A majority (68%) who took non-prescription pain relievers took them either daily, or several times a week.
- Half of seniors surveyed (48%, or 3.5 million) said doctors didn't tell them about possible harmful interactions between pain drugs and other medications they were taking. Four in ten seniors (37%, or 2.7 million) said doctors didn't discuss the potential side effects of the pain drugs they prescribed or recommended.
- Americans over 60 who take pain drugs are most likely to consult at least three different doctors about their pain conditions. Eight in ten (79%) saw primary care physicians compared to 17% who saw orthopedists, 9% who saw rheumatologists, and 6% who saw neurologists.

1998-1999

Chronic Pain in America: Roadblocks to Relief

Chronic Pain in America: Roadblocks to Relief was conducted by Roper Starch Worldwide Inc. for the American Pain Society, the American Academy of Pain Medicine, and Janssen Pharmaceutica. The survey was conducted between October and November 1998 and released in January 1999. The purpose of the study was to heighten awareness and understanding of consumers with and the medical community on the issue of chronic pain and the need to treat it aggressively.

Size of the Chronic Pain Population Segment

An estimated 9% of US adult population suffer from moderate to severe pain that is as much of a problem to middle age adults as seniors, and one more woman are likely to face than men.

Nature of Pain

- 2/3 of pain sufferers have been living with their pain for more than five years.
- 1 in 3 describe their pain as the worst it can be.

Control of Pain

- Over 1/2 of those with moderate pain say their pain is pretty much under control.
- The majority of those with severe pain do not have it under control, and among those who do, it took about 6 months to get it that way.

Impact of Pain on Quality of Life

- Untreated pain or pain not under control has a significant negative impact on the sufferers' quality of life, affecting ability to concentrate, do their job, exercise, socialize, get a good night's sleep, perform household chores, and have sex.

Effectiveness of Medical Care

- Almost all respondents have seen a doctor for pain, yet 4 in 10 are not seeing a doctor for pain because they felt their doctors could not give them more help.
- For those with severe pain, 7 in 10 are seeing a doctor.
- More than 1 in 4 wait 6 months to see a doctor because they believe nothing more can be done for them.
- Chronic pain sufferers have difficulty finding doctors who can effectively treat their pain. 1 in 4 have made at least three changes in doctors. The primary reason for changing was that they still had pain after treatment. Other reasons include: pain not taken seriously; doctors unwilling to treat aggressively; and doctors' lack of knowledge about pain.

Perception of Effectiveness of Medication

- Doctors are not a major barrier when patients ask for medicine. When a referral to a pain clinic or program was made, most managed care programs or Workman's Comp permitted access.
- Majority of chronic pain sufferers believe OTCs, narcotic pain relievers and prescriptions NSAIDs can relieve moderate to severe pain. Those with moderate pain said that about NSAIDs, while those with severe pain said that about narcotic pain relievers.
- Among those with severe pain, use of narcotic pain relievers equals that of prescription NSAIDs.
- Concerns about addiction are greater than concerns about stigma.

Role of Non-medical Therapies

- Non-medical therapies are not providing relief, since a majority of chronic pain sufferers have also used these.
- A small but significant percentage of pain sufferers turn to alcohol for relief.

Problems with Dosage Regimens

- Most respondents say they take their medications at times prescribed by doctors. This is more true of those with moderate pain because they take less medication than those with severe pain. Among those who don't follow doctors' regimen, there is a strong feeling of wanting to control the medicine they take.

The Problem of Delivery

- Almost all chronic pain sufferers take their medicine in pill form and most feel it's the best way. The preference can be attributed in part to the fact that few have had experience with alternate methods of taking medicine.

The 1999 National Pain Survey

This survey, which focuses on experiences of pain patients and their experiences with prescription pain medications, was conducted by Louis Harris and Associates for Ortho McNeil. The survey follows up on the 1994 survey that examined "the analgesic dilemma"—which looked at patient fears about drug side effects such as gastrointestinal disorders and addiction, and prescribing practices of physicians.

Key Findings

- One in four Americans suffer from chronic pain and 1 in 10 takes prescription medicine to manage it.
- The most common types of pain are arthritis, lower back, other bone/joint pain, muscle pain, and fibromyalgia.
- Despite people's use of medications, 2/3 chronic pain sufferers (13.6 million Americans) cannot perform routine tasks because of chronic pain.
- Two in five said pain affects their ability to work.
- Many pain sufferers who took NSAIDs did so for 5 to 10 years despite warning labels, and a significant number of these (2.5 million) had ulcers and other gastrointestinal disorders caused by them.
- The most common prescription pain medication used by pain sufferers were NSAIDs followed by oxycodones. They were least likely to take tramadol.
- Physicians rated oxycodones as very effective, but 9 in 10 were concerned about side effects including addiction.
- Although doctors less likely to prescribe tramadol than NSAIDs, they are less concerned about side effects.

1999-2000

Pain in America: A Research Report

One of the most often cited pain surveys, *Pain in America* was developed for Merck by Ogilvy Public Relations. The survey was conducted in May and June of 1999 by the Gallup Organization. The findings were released on April 6, 2000, by the Arthritis Foundation, the Society of Aging, Business and Professional Women USA, General Foundation of Women's Clubs, MANA (a national Latina organization), and the National Council of Negro Women.

Key Findings:

- Nine in ten Americans suffered from regular pain (89% reported they have some sort of pain on a monthly or more often basis).

- Close to 26 million Americans suffered from severe pain. Fifteen percent who experienced pain once a month or more, reported severe pain (this equates to close to 26 million Americans). Forty-six percent reported moderate pain.
- Close to 42 percent said they experienced pain daily.
- On an average, people with moderate to severe pain have lived with it for close to 1.5 years.

Impact of Attitudes Towards Pain:

- Eighty-three million Americans reported that pain frequently affects their participation in some activities. Forty-three percent of respondents reported that pain affected participation in some activities. Activities most likely to be affected are bending, stooping, or kneeling.
- 36 million Americans have missed work in the past year due to pain.
- Fatigue and frustration are commonly associated with pain.
- Four in five Americans believed aches and pains were a part of getting older and 64 percent would only see a doctor when they could not stand the pain any longer. Sixty percent said that pain was something you just have to live with, and 55% said they were uncomfortable taking medications. Fifty-four percent said they prefer being alone when they were in pain, and 50% said they were in a bad mood when in pain. Twenty-eight percent said they felt there was no solution for their pain.

Managing Pain

- Forty-three percent of respondents said they have complete control of their pain. Those with moderate to severe pain reported having less control.
- Many Americans saw a doctor for pain. Fifty-one percent saw a doctor in the three years prior to the survey.
- Forty-two percent said they were satisfied that their doctors' completely understood how they felt as a result of their pain. One in three reported that their doctors' understood a lot, but not completely.

2000

A Survey of Pain in America

On November 14, 2000, Partners Against Pain, the educational arm of Purdue Pharma, released the findings of a survey of 1,000 pain patients.

Key Findings

- At least one member of almost half of America's 44 million households (43 percent) suffers from chronic pain due to a specific illness or medical condition.
- Eighty percent of patients surveyed thought that their pain was a normal part of their medical condition and something with which they must live.
- For one third of sufferers, their chronic pain was so severe and debilitating, they felt they couldn't function as normal people and sometimes felt so bad they wanted to die.
- Some 40% said they were uncomfortable discussing their pain and 37% said they felt isolated and alone.
- One-third of sufferers did not believe people understood how much pain they were in, and one quarter said their families were tired of hearing about it.
- Fifty six percent of pain patients said that pain interfered with their sleeping, 51 percent said it interfered with their mood; 30% their ability to drive; and 28% their ability to have sexual relations.
- Those not completely happy with their doctors cited unsuccessful treatment (62%) as the main reason.
- Patients were so dissatisfied with the efficacy of their prescription and OTC pain control medications, that 78% were willing to try new treatments, and 43% said they would spend all their money if they thought it would work.
- Two thirds said their OTC medications were not effective, and 52% of those taking prescription medications said they were not effective.

2002

Pain in Maryland

Pain in Maryland was conducted for the American Pain Foundation and the Maryland Pain Initiative by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc. from February 7-11, 2002. A total of 625 Maryland adults were interviewed statewide by telephone.

Key Findings:

Incidence and Frequency of Pain

- Nearly half (49%) of all Marylanders suffer from pain. One in three (34%) say that they live with moderate to severe pain.
- Approximately 1.4 million households (66%) in Maryland have at least one person suffering with pain.
- As many as 49% say they experience some form of pain on at least a monthly basis. Of these respondents, 40% say that they experience pain everyday, or almost everyday.

Impact of Pain

- Pain causes the majority of pain sufferers (68%) to feel anxious, irritable, or depressed.
- More than half of those with pain (59%) say that their pain interferes with their ability to sleep.
- Forty percent of those with pain say that their pain interferes with their productivity and ability to work.
- Thirty-one percent of pain sufferers say that their pain interferes with their sexual relations, and 21% say it negatively affects relationships with friends and family.
- Twenty-five percent of pain sufferers say that their pain causes them to feel helpless and alone.

Attitudes Towards Pain

- More than half of respondents (65%) say that pain is just something they have to live with or it's just a part of growing old.
- Sixty-one percent of respondents said that people don't seek help because they are embarrassed and don't want to seem like they are complaining.
- As many as 78% of those who say they suffer from regular pain, say they have never been referred to a pain specialist.

2003

America Speaks: Pain in America

This 2003 survey was conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates as a nationwide survey for Research!America. The purpose of this study was to assess the view of Americans about pain in America. The survey's objectives included gauging Americans' perceptions of how pain sufferers and the medical community deal with the problems of chronic pain.

Key Findings:

- Much of America is hurting: The majority of adults (57%) in this country have experienced chronic or recurrent pain in the past year.
- Significant numbers of current pain sufferers have had to make real changes in their lifestyles to accommodate their pain.
- Levels of sympathy vary, but overall, most people who interact with a chronic pain sufferer on a daily basis are supportive, say the sufferers themselves.
- Nine in ten current pain sufferers have consulted some type of medical professional to try to ease their pain, and these professionals have prescribed everything from over-the-counter medications to surgery-with mixed results, according to survey respondents.
- An important disconnect exists between Americans' personal experience with pain and the broad general attitude of society.

- After all the lifestyle changes, doctor visits, and treatments, people still think that more could be done. In the end, there is hope that long-term remedies can be found and a willingness to fund research toward that end.

Americans in Pain

- Of the individuals suffering with chronic pain more than three in five have been in pain for more than a year and back pain is the most common type.
- Individuals under the age of 35 are about as likely as older Americans to have experienced pain.

Dealing with Pain

- When asked how their pain has affected day-to-day life, three-quarters (75%) of current pain sufferers acknowledge that they have had to make adjustments, including 33% who say they have had to make major adjustments.
- Among the major adjustments that chronic pain sufferers have made are such serious steps as taking disability leave from work (20%), changing jobs altogether (17%), getting help with activities of daily living (13%) and moving to a home that is easier to manage (13%).

Do You Feel My Pain?

- Family members are among the most helpful to chronic pain sufferers. Three in four pain sufferers say that their spouse or significant other is generally supportive and helpful.
- Doctors (72% supportive and helpful) get high marks, but bosses (51%) earn mixed reviews. In fact, (16%) of pain sufferers who have a boss say that their boss is indifferent and tends to ignore them when the subject of pain comes up.

A Visit to the Doctor

- Most pain sufferers (63%) have seen their family doctor for help.
- Forty percent made an appointment with a specialist, such as an orthopedist.
- Twenty Five percent have visited a chiropractor or a doctor that specializes in pain management (15%).
- While 43% of pain sufferers have been to only one type of doctor for their pain, a large proportion (38%) have consulted more than one practitioner in the medical community.
- Treatments for pain have yielded mixed results. Although 58% of those who took prescription medication say that doing so was very fairly effective for their pain, only 41% of those who took over-the-counter medications experienced the same relief. Chiropractic treatments proved effective for 54% of pain sufferers who tried them, while more standard physical therapy was effective for 48%. Fifty-four percent of pain suffers who had surgery say that it was effective.
- Overall, 58% of current chronic pain sufferers say that they are very somewhat satisfied with the treatment of their pain.

The Pain Paradox

- As prevalent and significant as chronic pain is in our society, findings suggest that Americans rate chronic pain as the least problematic item on a list of health issues that includes cancer, obesity, heart disease, alcohol and drug abuse and AIDS.
- Americans downplay their experience with pain.
- An overwhelming 84% of adults believe that a person's state of mind influences the experience of physical pain a great deal or a fair amount, suggesting that a person can control his or her pain.
- In terms of health care costs, people feel by more than two to one that over-reacting to one's pain drives up costs more than does under reacting.

The Pain Gap

- Two-thirds of pain sufferers expect to have to live with at least some pain for the rest of their lives, compared with only 30% who expect to become pain-free because of a cure or as a result of treatment medications.

- Among non-pain sufferers with a close family member or friend who has chronic pain or recurrent pain, a majority (53%) feel that more can be done to ease their loved one's pain.
- Seven in ten Americans feel that pain research and management should be one of the medical community's top few priorities (16%) or a high priority (55%)
- Almost six in 10 adults (57%) say they would be willing to pay one dollar more per week in taxes to increase federal funding for the scientific research into the causes and treatment of pain.

2003

Lost Productive Time and Cost Due to Common Pain Conditions in the US Workforce

Stewart, W.F., Ricci, J.A., Chee, E., Morganstein, D., & Lipton, R. (2003). Lost productive time and cost due to common pain conditions in the US workforce. Journal of the American Medical Association, 290(18), 2443-2454.

Data from the American Productivity Audit, a computer assisted telephone survey of health and work, of 28,902 working adults between August, 2001 and July 2002, was used to estimate lost productive time due to headache, arthritis, back pain, and other musculoskeletal conditions expressed in hours per worker per week and calculated in US dollars. Stewart and colleagues evaluated the impact of pain on productivity by estimating lost productive time and economic cost due to painful conditions.

Key Findings:

- Over half (52.7%) of the workforce surveyed reported having headache, back pain, arthritis, or other musculoskeletal pain in the past two weeks, and 12.7% of all workforce lost productive time in a two-week period due to pain.
- Headache (5.4%) was the most common pain condition prompting lost productive time: followed by back pain (3.2%), arthritis pain (2%) and other musculoskeletal pain (2%).
- Overall, workers lost an average of 4.6 hours per week of productive time due to a pain condition.
- Other musculoskeletal pain (5.5 hours/week) and arthritis or back pain (5.2 hours/week) produced the largest amounts of lost productive time.
- Headache produced, on average, 3.5 hours of lost productive time per week.
- Age did not seem to attenuate the findings.
- Lost productive time from common painful conditions was estimated to be \$61.2 billion per year, while 76.6% of lost productive time was explained by reduced work performance, not absenteeism.

2004

Americans Living With Pain Survey

This 2004 survey was conducted by Roper Public Affairs and Media, on behalf of the American Chronic Pain Association (ACPA) with support from Endo Pharmaceuticals. The survey findings are based on 800 telephone interviews conducted with adults experiencing chronic pain in the United States.

The purpose of this survey was to ascertain:

- How pain impacts the quality of life for people living with pain.
- The extent of their communication with doctors.
- Perceptions and use of various treatment options.

Key Findings:

- Chronic pain is a serious health condition that some have been living with for a relatively long time and, in most cases, facing daily.

- Nearly one half of respondents say their pain is not under control – in particular, those whose pain is ever present, men, and those who are middle aged.
- Among those who reported having chronic pain, age does not play a significant role in reporting back pain – the most prevalent type of pain. Similar proportions of younger (56% of 18 – 34 year olds), middle aged (50% of 35 – 64 year olds) and older (49% of 65 + year olds) report their back is where they feel the most pain.
- Those with chronic pain experience difficulties on the job and their personal relationships suffer due to their condition.
- Chronic pain adversely affects quality of life for people with pain – both in terms of their day-to-day activities and their emotional well-being.
- People's attitude toward their pain when it first develops is quite casual. Although nearly half talk to a doctor about it within a month, nearly as many wait longer with a significant number waiting for over three months.
- Those with chronic pain are just as likely to be taking an OTC medication as an Rx medication; relatively few are using only alternative treatments.
- Exclusive OTC usage is mainly a function of the nature of the user's pain, product performance, and financial considerations.
- Nearly all of those with chronic pain turn to alternative treatments regardless of the medications they are using or the nature of their pain. This would indicate that current Rx and OTC medications by themselves are not providing as much relief as desired or that such usage helps ease the financial burden of treatment.
- Significant numbers of those with chronic pain have concerns about taking pain medications; their concerns range from potential side effects, the medication being addictive, the need for increased usage over time and the possibility of having to take them for the rest of their lives. Such concerns are higher among women and those who are not exclusive Rx users and vary based on the age of the individual.
- There is hesitancy to take a narcotic pain reliever among a significant number of those currently taking a prescription medication for their pain, especially among women and those taking OTC medication along with their prescription medication.
- Those using both Rx and OTC medication for their pain are more likely to be experiencing side effects from the medication than exclusive Rx users. This dual treatment may be required, since the pain being treated this way affects a wider range of everyday activities and relationships with other people than the pain being treated differently.
- Other factors affecting treatment include the high incidence of taking Rx medication for other health conditions, the belief or possibility that their access to Rx pain medication might be more difficult in the future, as well as currently not getting their Rx prescriptions filled due to financial considerations, especially among those with ever present pain.
- Most of those with chronic pain do not know if a prescription patch product can provide the same amount of relief as a prescription oral pain medication, primarily because they do not know enough about them and how they work.
- Non-compliance is a major issue in taking RX medication for pain, especially among those taking both Rx and OTC medications. Side effects and financial factors are the primary causes.

*For The American Pain Foundation
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